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Senate panel passes Sen. Kuipers' bill to increase child-seat use

LANSING — The Senate Transportation Committee legislation sponsored by Sen. Wayne Kuipers that would target repeat offenders of child-safety seat laws. The senator worked with constituent Gene Koopman, a member of the Lakeshore Safe Kids coalition, in creating the proposal.

Kuipers' Senate Bill 491 would increase the fine when someone previously ticketed for violating Michigan's child-restraint laws again is cited. The fine would go from \$10 to \$100 for people who fail to properly restrain a child younger than 16. Companion legislation in the House of Representatives would help low-income parents buy child seats with funds raised from the increased fines.

"Children need proper safety seats when they travel across our state," Kuipers said. "Car crashes still kill far too many children in Michigan, and we have to do more to boost the usage of child safety seats."

Motor-vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of accidental death for children up to age 15, according to the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning. The statistics for 2002 show that 49 children younger than 15 died and 7,232 were injured in traffic crashes in Michigan.

The National Safe Kids Campaign is a national, nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention of unintentional childhood injury.

The legislation now goes to the Senate floor.

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